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Effort to Stem Aliens' Inflow May Be Futile

The immigration bill now working its way through Congress is intended, among other things, to stem the flood of illegal aliens who have been pouring across the Mexican border virtually unchecked.

But it could all be a futile effort if something isn't done to cure Mexico's internal economic troubles. It's the desperate poverty of Mexico's peasants that impels them to seek menial jobs in the United States, living the shadowy existence of illegal aliens in daily fear of discovery and deportation.

As long as life for Mexico's poor is without hope, they will continue to cross the border. Nothing short of a 1,933-mile Berlin Wall will stop them.

In fact, my associate Dale Van Atta has learned that the Pentagon is considering a plan only slightly less drastic. A Defense Intelligence Agency study is trying to determine how many U.S. Army divisions would be required to seal off the porous Mexican border.

It's not clear that even the Army could accomplish this formidable task. What is abundantly clear is

that the 2,300-member U.S. Border Patrol—with fewer than 300 on duty at any given time—doesn't stand a chance.

The patrol concentrates its meager manpower at such "easy" crossings as Laredo and El Paso, Tex.; Douglas, Ariz., and Chula Vista, Calif., counting on the life-threatening rigors of the rugged mountains and scorching deserts at other points to discourage illegal immigrants. Not surprisingly, the patrol has caught only a small percentage of the uncounted millions who have crossed the border in recent years.

A significant ingredient in the Mexican peasants' desperation is their frustration over the way they have been ground down by the privileged few.

A few years ago, when Mexico's huge oil reserves were discovered, it seemed as if the economic troubles were at last over. But the wealthy 10 percent and their hirelings in the dominant political party skimmed off billions and left nothing to trickle down to the 40 percent of the population that lives in abject poverty. Mexico is now saddled with more than \$80 billion in foreign debt.

Indicative of the frustration and despair is the outpouring of grateful letters I've received in response to my recent reports on the misuse of Mexico's wealth by government officials at every level.

It is "about time to take off the

masks of the criminal traitors and show to the entire world who is responsible for our backwardness and misery," one Mexican wrote. "[They] steal in a cynical and outrageous way and . . . there are no trials against these thieves [or] jail terms. Never will we be able to pay back what has been 'borrowed' by this den of thieves, and the people will keep on deeper and deeper in their misery."

U.S. intelligence sources agree with this depressing prediction. As a confidential State Department report warned, "Serious efforts to narrow the gap between Mexico's privileged and Mexico's poor would produce friction and resistance on the part of those with the most to lose"—that is, the ruling party elite and their cronies.

President Miguel de la Madrid's efforts to institute a strict austerity program (though without altering the unfair distribution of wealth) will only encourage the flow of illegal immigrants into this country. This could have serious implications for U.S. society.

"One does not have to subscribe to a Goths-and-Vandals theory on the downfall of civilizations to accept that the wave of Mexican immigrants is damaging," another State Department report observes. And when hard times and unemployment hit U.S. workers, it warns, the growing sentiment against illegal aliens could become "overwhelming."